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THREE TRACTS

RESPECTING THE
CONVERSION and INSTRUCTION
OF THE
FREE INDIANS
AND
NEGROE SLAVES
IN THE
COLONIES.
ADDRESSED TO THE
VENERABLE SOCIETY
FOR
PROPAGATION OF THE GOSPEL
IN
FOREIGN PARTS,
IN THE YEAR 1768.

By WILLIAM KNOX, Esq.

A NEW EDITION.

L O N D O N :

Printed for J. DEBRETT, opposite *Burlington House*,
Piccadilly,

M,DCC,LXXXIX.



TRACT THE FIRST.

OF THE INDIANS IN THE COLONIES.

THE variety of sects to be found amongst the European inhabitants of the colonies, though a thing to be lamented by a lover of unity among Christians, and frequently urged as a proof of the little success attending the society's missions, is in truth the clearest evidence of the great service done to religion by the venerable Society for propagating the gospel, and the great benefits the people of America have derived from its establishment. In almost every new settled colony the inhabitants were too poor and too much dispersed to agree upon a common place for public worship, or to maintain a clergyman to officiate at it, and their descendants, though more numerous and drawn nearer together, would hardly have desired to know more of religion than they had learned from their fathers. But, when through means of

the Society, a regular mode of worship had been settled, and the duties of religion were inculcated at stated times, the people who would have satisfied their own minds with never attending any church, had there been none to go to, found themselves stimulated by their own conscience, or reproached by their neighbours, and so compelled either to attend the subsisting form of worship, or procure one they liked better; and thus has religion been propagated throughout the whole country.

But although one great purpose of the Society has been answered, and the descendants of the European settlers have been kept back from degenerating into the barbarism and ignorance of the natives, it is much to be lamented that so little has been done towards instructing the free Indians or Negroe slaves in the colonies. The obstacles to the conversion of the Indians are indeed many and formidable. Were they only ignorant of our religion, their natural good sense would give hopes of their imbibing its doctrines, so soon as they were properly explained and set before them; but the misfortune is, that they are not only ignorant of it, but what they do know, and are taught, is diametrically opposite to the doctrines of Christianity. While they are infants they are taught to repeat the warlike achievements of their ancestors, and the tortures they suffered or inflicted upon their enemies; and they are required to prove the sincerity of their
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professions to imitate such examples, by patiently bearing hunger for several days, suffering their limbs to be lacerated by fishes teeth, or standing resolutely under a plate of iron with burning coals upon their heads until the scalp is parched to a cinder. No wonder then that their wars are hereditary, and that Indian resentments are so implacable. As the object of their wars is always the utter extirpation of their enemies, they are instructed to destroy an enemy in the manner the most safe for themselves; and for the same reason, killing a woman or a child is more highly honoured than slaying a man. Hence their subtlety and their cruelty to the innocent and helpless inhabitants. No Indian can be considerable in his nation until he is dubbed a warrior, and that he can never be without producing a scalp, and hence the frequency of wars with each other. Of all our methods of making war, none appeared to them so ridiculous and absurd as our sparing prisoners, and many of their parties withdrew from us on that account. What, say they, after you have got your enemy in your power, will you let him go, that he may kill you or your friends again? Vagrant in their manner of life, without social intercourse even among each other, jealous in the highest degree of their liberty and independency, and attached to their customs and nation, with more than Spartan pride and tenacity. Such we found them. They had, however, some notions

notions of honesty in their little dealings, but those we have eradicated. Our traders and they now mutually deceive each other. Our traders cut short their measure, and they sow lead bullets in the ears and tails of their skins. Both expect to be cheated, and under that expectation each makes his bargain, and fraud is become so customary, that it would be very difficult, if not impracticable, to establish an honest tariff between them. The Indians never complain of a trader cheating them unless he is remarkably dextrous and exorbitant, and then they only charge them with cheating them *too much*.

Very unpromising principles, and dispositions these, on which to graft the meek, forbearing, equitable, and benevolent tenets of Christianity!

The cause is not, however, to be forsaken as altogether hopeless. Their conversion may, through God's blessing, still be effected, though a much greater compass must be taken than has hitherto been thought necessary, to attain it.

The protestant missionaries, in order to do themselves credit, make it their first object to get the Indians to submit to be baptized, and preparatory thereto they opened to them the most mysterious doctrines of Christianity, shocking their pride by displaying their original corruptions and blindness, and exciting their jealousy, by the change they are told is to be wrought in them. They inform them of the
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spiritual worship, which is to be paid to the Deity, ridicule their talismans, and at once exhort them to cease to be Indians, lay aside all their own customs, quit their country and independency, and become a poor contemptible people among us. The Roman catholic missionaries take a different method, and have therefore been more successful. They first conciliate the good will of the Indians by following their customs, and learning their language. Being provided with medicines, and skilled in the use of them, they soon get the Indians to trust more in their talismans for their cure, than in their own. And the missionary becomes the Indian conjurer, before he discloses his purpose. Their inquiry whence he had his talisman and its virtues, naturally opens to him an occasion of discoursing to them of the supreme Being, whom they all have some notion of the *master of breath*, and of Christ Jesus the great Conjurer, who cured all the world on the other side the great water, and would have come to the Indians if he had not been killed by bad people. He shews them a relic, which he pretends cures all diseases, and which his love for the Indians made him bring to them. So far from shocking their prejudices by preaching forgiveness of injuries or peace with their enemies, he points their enmity against his nation's enemies as those who had prevented the great Conjurer from coming to them. If by following his instructions they gain an advantage over their enemies or escape unhurt,

unhurt, they readily impute their good fortune to the virtues of his talisman, and in their future expeditions submit to such discipline, by way of preparation for a successful enterprise, as he shall enjoin them. Thus are they baptized, and made to believe in Christ, without perceiving that they are become Christians; and their attachment to the missionary is such, as to lead them to adopt implicitly any mode or custom he may think proper to institute. *Such Christians* do not indeed deserve to be called proselytes; for although they looked upon our Saviour to have been a great benefactor to mankind, they neither know him for their redeemer, nor conform to his doctrine or example. These instructions were however sufficient for political purposes, and made them good allies to the French, though but indifferent members of the catholic church, and perhaps the continual contentions between the European settlers in America might be the reason why the French missionaries gave them no better notions. But all enmity having now ceased in those parts, and the whole dominion being in Great Britain; our *State* and *Church* are both called upon to co-operate in forming and supporting a probable system for converting these savage people. To contribute what in me lies to so good a work, is the intention of this paper, and I shall therefore go on to suggest such a plan as my acquaintance with the Indians gives me hopes would succeed,

succeed, submitting it to the consideration of the venerable Society.

In this great undertaking government must lead the way. Instructions should be sent to the agents and governors, to exhort the Indians to live in peace with each other. And to take away the motive of the young men to make war, the king's officers should be directed to distinguish those who were expert in hunting or cultivating the ground, by presents above the warriors. This would presently beget a civil means of becoming considerable. To induce them to leave their women and children always in their towns, which is the first step towards their civilization, they should be furnished with a variety of garden seeds, and tools to plant them with. Neat cattle would be acceptable presents, and a great means of civilizing them, and poultry would oblige them to fence and inclose their habitations. Locks and hinges should be furnished them as a means of teaching them property; and no regard should ever be shown to those who made depredations upon others. Government having done so much, the Society might then begin. The missionary should be instructed in physic, and be supplied with medicines. To give him consequence it would be proper that the superintendant gave him a deputation for the town or nation he resided in. He should be enabled to pay the Indians for building him a neat house, and cultivating some ground as a garden. He should be furnished

nished with cows, and every means of subsistence, which was intended to be introduced among the Indians. He might introduce the silk culture among them, in the warm and temperate climates, by planting the mulberry trees, and paying the women and children for gathering the leaves. By such kindnesses they would be led to consider him as their best friend, and would not oppose their children learning any song or rhyme he might pay them for getting by heart. The great Indian nations would never suffer their children to be taught our language; their policy is to keep as much from us as they can; so that whatever instruction is given them must be stolen upon them in their own language. As no real profelytes were ever made, but those who sought to be converted; an illiterate people must first have a desire of knowledge excited in them before they can be taught. Curiosity must therefore first be excited in the Indians before their attention to any doctrine can be engaged, and when their attention is fixed, such things should only be proposed to them as their present state will admit of their receiving. It ought to be remembered, that man was intended for polished society, and that the Christian dispensation is adapted to him in his best state. It was not till after the Greek and Roman civility had been spread over the world, that Christianity was promulgated. While the Jews were an erratic people, had settle-

settlements to purchase by the sword, hereditary antipathies against other nations to maintain, and were to pride themselves in customs which distinguished them from the rest of mankind, a less perfect system was thought better suited to their circumstances. The Indians have no sacrifices nor days of expiation, nor do they pay any sort of religious worship to any thing in heaven or earth. It would therefore be impracticable in the beginning, to make them comprehend the necessity for Christ's suffering, or to convince them of the benefits derived to them through his blood. They could not possibly understand the prohibitions in either the second or third commandment, and as all that they do is work of necessity, they would not be much edified by lectures upon the fourth. Baptism should not be administered to children whose parents had not received it themselves, or desired it for them. I have said, that the Indians are jealous of their independency, and if their children should be flattered to receive that sacrament, they would think something very different from its purpose was intended by it.

When the English traders come into the Indian nation, the missionary should then exercise his function. Their assembling on a Sunday would lead the Indians to inquire what was doing, and the missionary to oblige them, might preach in the Indian language. His discourse should notwithstanding be directed entirely to the traders, but so framed,

as to make favourable impressions on the Indians, and induce them to come again. On such occasions he should exhort the traders to look upon the Indians as brothers, all created by one common father the *great Spirit*, and to deal justly, and not to use their knowledge of trade to over-reach the unsuspecting Indian. He should enlarge upon the great advantages they derived from having received their birth and education in a country where the will of Almighty God had been clearly revealed, and thence urge them to be more particularly careful in their conduct towards the Indians, who had no such advantages, but were brought up in the wild forests without other instruction than their own natural sagacity furnished them with. He should represent it to be in an especial manner their duty to inform the Indians of any thing which the *great Spirit* had revealed, if they desired to know it; and that as in another life they should be all one people, so they should now live together in the same manner. That they were to remember, that in the other world, when they came to live again, they should be rewarded or punished according to what they had done here, for that the *great Spirit* knew every thing they did, and saw them wherever they went. These are things the Indians could understand, and would probably desire to hear again; and some would perhaps be led to wish for farther instruction. The public exhortations should nevertheless
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be continued upon the first simple plan, because as new comers would every day be dropping in, it would be much better to give higher instruction in private to such whose early attention or quicker parts might require it, than to overpower the understandings of weaker or duller hearers. No point of controversy among Christians should ever be mentioned, not only to save the Indians the perplexity of discussing things with which they can have nothing to do, but to engage the assistance of all denominations of Christians in the colonies, who, if they were acquainted with the plan of our missionaries, would readily give their own the like catholic instructions. Whatever be the method taken up, if any success be expected from it among the Indians, it must be founded on this principle, *that nothing is to be pressed upon them*; their own desires must move foremost, and those will always carry them to ask as much as they can receive.



TRACT THE SECOND.

OF THE NEGROE SLAVES IN THE COLONIES.

THE difficulties attending a plan for the instruction of the negroe slaves in our colonies are very different from the obstacles which present themselves to the conversion of the North American Indians. The quick sagacity of the Indian keeps him aloof from every attempt to convert him. The dull stupidity of the Negroe leaves him without any desire for instruction. Whether the Creator originally formed these black people a little lower than other men, or that they have lost their intellectual powers through disuse, I will not assume the province of determining; but certain it is, that a *new Negroe*, (as those lately imported from Africa are called,) is a complete definition of indolent stupidity, nor could a more forcible means be employed for the conversion of a deist, than setting one of these creatures before him, as an example of man in a state of nature, *unbi-*
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*ass*ed by revelation or education. Their stupidity does not however authorize us to consider them as beasts for our use, much less to deny them all knowledge of the common salvation. The Negroes born in our colonies are undoubtedly capable of receiving instruction, and those who are born among the French are instructed in the Roman Catholic religion ; but our planters are generally averse to their Negroes being taught any thing but labour, and yet the generality of our North American planters have a regard for religion, and are punctual in the discharge of its duties, as far as they think themselves obliged by them. How this comes to pass must be our first inquiry ; for unless the planter can be prevailed on to give his assistance, it will be in vain to propose any method for instructing his slaves.

Our planters objections to their Negroes being instructed is simply this, that instruction renders them less fit or less willing to labour. Experience justifies their opinion, and a little reflection will convince us that such must be the consequence.

The British laws disown perpetual servitude, and the people of these islands have a general antipathy to slavery. The right of the planter to his Negroe is only founded on the acts of his provincial assembly, and beyond their jurisdiction he has no power over him. If he teaches his Negroe to read one book, he will of himself read another, and such has been the imprudence of some ill-

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informed writers, that books are not wanting to exhort the Negroes to rebel against their masters. Were the Negroes universally taught to read, and *a late publication*,* which out of respect I forbear to name, put into their hands and circulated among them, there would be little doubt that the next ships informed us of a general insurrection of the Negroes, and the massacre of their owners ; and yet the writer's intention was certainly to engage the planter to have his Negroes instructed.

The case is very different with the French planter and his Negroes. The perpetual servitude of the Negroes is not only consented to by that nation, but is expressly authorized by the king's edict: " Declarons les esclaves
 " estre meubles & comme tels entrent en la
 " communauté, les enfans qui naissent de
 " mariage entre esclaves seront esclaves, &
 " appartiendront aux maîtres des femmes esclaves," are the terms of the perpetual edict of March, 1687. The French planter can therefore have no apprehension of losing his slave by giving him instruction, nor will the slave's being instructed make him less willing to obey his master. There are no books to be given them to read which charge their masters with *infringing both divine and human laws*† by retaining them in slavery ; nor are such doctrines transmitted to them under the

* Bishop Warburton's Sermon before the Society for Propagation of the Gospel.

† Vide Ibid.

sanction of a religious society composed of the governors of the national church. Here then is the true source of the evil, and the remedy is obvious. If the purchasing a Negroe for a slave be an *infringement of divine and human laws*,* in God's name, why is such a trade permitted? A few words in an act of parliament prohibiting the importation or sale of Negroes in our colonies will destroy the practice in future.—And a few words more, declaring the offspring of Negroes already imported to be free, will prevent slavery extending to the next generation. This method is certainly the most proper, and the only one which can have efficacy; nor does it seem very consistent in any member of either house of parliament to declaim without doors against the integrity of this transaction, and bear no testimony against its encouragement within. Even the last session of parliament, 1766, furnished an occasion for asserting the rights of the Negroes, and displaying the infamy of trading in them. The act for opening free ports in the West-Indies declares Negroes a *lawful commodity* and to be imported and sold there upon paying a certain duty; but neither upon the passing that act, nor upon the passing any former one for the encouragement of the African trade, does there appear a single protest in abhorrence of that trade, or of *treating rational creatures as property*.† But, besides, the

* Warburton's Sermon.

† Ibid.

perpetual servitude of the Negroes in our colonies is not the act of their masters, nor is it the mere effect of their power over those wretches. In every colony the right of the owner is fixed by the law of the colony framed under the king's instructions, and afterwards transmitted for his approbation in his privy council ; it was therefore in the discretion of the privy council to repeal all these acts of the colonies, when they were transmitted, and such of them as have not received the royal confirmation may still be repealed ; and if that were done, every Negroe born in the colonies would become entitled to all the privileges and franchises of the natural born subjects of this realm. How then does it happen, that these acts, so *repugnant to all divine and human laws*,* are suffered to exist ? Are there no lords of the council sufficiently zealous in the cause of liberty and religion to procure their repeal ? Or, are there none others to make application to the council for that purpose ? If therefore the purchasing the Negroes for slaves be a *violation of the laws of nature and humanity*, it is pretty evident that the American planters do not *alone* bear the weight of that iniquity, nor are they only to be called upon to remove the evil. If however on the other hand the purchasing Negroes for slaves be consistent with divine and human obligations, care should be taken to secure the property of the slave to his owner under all circum-

* Warburton's Sermon.

stances; and such a plan of instruction should be digested, as might best conduce to the Negroes eternal welfare, without making them uneasy in their present condition, or encouraging them to revolt against their owners. As the first thing to be done therefore is to determine the lawfulness of purchasing Negroes for slaves, it may be proper to state the fact fully, that those whose high office it is to expound the divine will as far as it has been revealed, may be the better able to judge of the conformity or repugnance of this transaction to it.

The African states on the west coast of that vast peninsula are all, except the Fantees and their confederates, purely monarchical, and the sovereign claims the absolute disposal of the persons as well as effects of his subjects. There is no individual over whom the sovereign does not claim this right, unless such individual has obtained his freedom by the grant of the sovereign. Those whom the sovereign has permitted to have property, invest it in slaves, which they purchase either of their sovereign or from the rich men of other states, or their own; these great men consider the offspring of their slaves as their annual income, and sell the children or parents as their convenience or necessity directs. Throughout Africa, as well among the Fantees as other nations, not only a man's slaves, but his wife, children, and even himself, are all liable to his debts, and the fines set on him by the sovereign or the supreme council. The monarchs by this means frequently repossess themselves of their

manumitted subjects and his slaves and children, and the Fantees by this means rid the state of any dangerous individual. That such should be the policy of the African states will not appear strange to any one who is acquainted with what passes or has past in more enlightened parts of the world. It is a good speculative position, that no man ought to be bound by conditions to which he never personally consented, yet we shall find no government existing where the child would not be punished for refusing submission to the constitution handed down to him by his ancestor; and indeed the permanency of all government rests upon the acknowledged right in the parent to decide the political condition of his offspring. In Ireland, more than two thirds of the inhabitants are not only denied a right to give their personal consent to the laws by which they and their children are bound, but they are made incapable of acquiring that sort of property which might give them influence with those who make the laws. It is still the case in Poland, and was the case in some parts of Britain not many years since, to transfer the service of the inhabitants and the power over their lives, with the titles to the lands; and it was the universal practice among the Asiatic nations, the Jews only excepted, to consider a man's wife and children as his effects, and to sell them for the satisfaction of his creditors, as appears from all history ancient and modern, but most authentically from
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the parable of debtor and creditor, recorded by St. Matthew.

These things are not mentioned either to excuse the policy of the African states by their example, or to censure those who have done them ; but in order to obviate a vulgar reflection upon the African traders, which is, that the slavery of the people on that continent is owing to the demand their princes have found for slaves from the American colonies ; whereas men have sold one another from the very earliest ages of the world, and wherever sovereign authority has been lodged, it has assumed a right to dispose of the lives and properties of the subjects. From the coast of Guinea to the extremity of Abyssinia there is not a state, the Fantees only excepted, where the people are not, and as far as we know of them, always were, slaves ; and their princes and great men traded with one another in slaves long before America was discovered. The demand which the American colonies have occasioned, has probably given rise to many acts of tyranny and oppression in the sovereigns, in order to possess themselves of the slaves of their great men ; but on the other hand it may have made them more careful of the lives of their own slaves or subjects, because of the profit they made by selling them. A captain of an English ship who had offered the king of Dormi or Dehouma less than he had asked for five hundred of his slaves, was invited by him to dinner the following day ; they dined in a tent, and when they were rising from table, the

the king of Dormi said to the captain, You would not give me my price for my five hundred slaves, did you think I valued them too high? You may now have them for half the money. And ordering the back of the tent to be drawn up, the five hundred heads were shewn to him piled upon one another. This story, which is indubitably attested, is a shocking proof of the despotism of the African princes, and it also serves to shew how ill founded another vulgar notion is, that the Negroes annually brought to our colonies from Africa, are stolen by our traders from thence. Indeed it is astonishing, that such a notion should ever have been entertained by any one, who ever thought about trade. To suppose that the several European states should settle forts and factories upon that coast, in order to protect their subjects in stealing away the inhabitants; that the same ships and captains should return annually to the same places, and among them steal away near forty thousand people each voyage, is so monstrous, that the bare stating it is a sufficient confutation. The manner in which that trade is carried on is this: The return of our ships to the coast of Africa being regular, the Negroe factors bring down the slaves they have purchased in the interior parts of the country at the times the ships are expected, and sell or barter them to our captains for the best price they can get; some of these factors bring slaves even from the interior parts of Abyssinia, if their own accounts may be credited, and others are brought

brought them from an equal distance to the sea coast of Barbary to supply the Turks. The princes and great men who reside near the coast, or upon the navigable rivers, make their own bargains with our ship captains, or the governors of our forts, so that instances are very rare, of even single Negroes being clandestinely carried off by any of our people ; whenever such a thing has been done, the captain who did it has never dared to return there again ; and very fatal revenge has been taken upon some of his countrymen.

The Negroes being arrived in our colonies, are put up to sale by their owners, and the planters purchase them. The Fantees are generally carried to Jamaica, where they are greatly valued on account of their hardiness and high spirit. But as they were freemen in their own country, they are very difficult to be managed as slaves, and this is the principal reason of the frequent insurrection in that island ; while upon the continent especially, insurrections are seldom heard of.

The other Negroes having been always slaves, submit to their new masters willingly enough, when they know how they are to be employed. At first indeed they are under great terrors of being eat by the white people, and so strong have the apprehensions of many of them been upon their arrival, that no entreaties could prevail on them to take any sustenance, lest they should become fat and fitter for our food, until some of their countrymen who had resided some time in
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the colony were brought to them, and convinced them of the folly of their suspicions.

From this account of the trade, the plain state of the question seems to be, whether it be lawful in the captains of our ships to purchase Negroes in Africa from those of that country, who by the nature of their government, consider them as their property, and keep them in actual servitude? And whether it be lawful for the British subjects in the colonies to purchase those Negroes of those captains, and to continue them and their offspring in a state of servitude?

If the reverend members of the Society should be of opinion that this trade is contrary to divine laws, it will surely be proper to apply to government for an act of parliament to prohibit it, and at the same time to apply for lands to be given to such Negroes as their masters, influenced by that opinion, may release from servitude; for such will be its effect upon many of the North American planters. But if on the contrary the opinion should be, that the trade is not a violation of the divine laws, it will be highly proper to transmit that opinion to the colonies, for the satisfaction of conscientious planters, as well as to encourage them to give their Negroes instruction, thereby to avail themselves of such authority for making them contented with their condition.

No planter is so grossly barbarous as not to wish to have his Negroes do his work with a good will; and very few would be so brutal

tal or ignorant as not to perceive, that were their Negroes instructed in religion, and taught to serve their masters for conscience sake, that they would be much better served by them ; but it is surely the height of folly to expect of any owner of Negroes to permit them to be told, that he violates all divine and human laws by retaining them in his service, or to allow them to have any notions of a religion, whose sanctions he must appear to them to condemn, by making them his slaves. Until therefore the lawfulness of continuing these people in perpetual servitude be determined, it will be in vain to expect that our American planters will permit their Negroes to be instructed, much less contribute towards their instruction.

Many regulations are wanting for securing good usage to these unhappy people, which no authority, but that of parliament, can enforce, and it is most reproachful to this country, that there are more than five hundred thousand of its subjects, for whom the legislature has never shewn the least regard. All regulations, it is true, would be preposterous if the servitude of these people be unlawful ; but then it is still more reproachful to this country, that so great a number of its subjects are unlawfully made slaves. On all accounts therefore the lawfulness of the thing must first be determined. When the lords the bishops have declared their opinion of the divine law, an act of parliament will be sufficient to decide what shall be human

law; and until the first is declared, it would be presumption to offer any regulations to be made by the other.

A P P E N D I X.

Some time after the foregoing tracts were written, and were presented to the late most reverend and learned president of the Society for propagating the gospel in foreign parts, the opinion of the Society respecting the lawfulness of purchasing or keeping Negroe slaves was called for in order to frame an answer to a letter received by the Society from Mr. Benezet of Philadelphia. With the permission of the venerable Society, I subjoin a copy of the answer written by their secretary, as containing their opinion.

Copy of a letter sent by the reverend Doctor Burton, secretary of the Society for the propagation of the gospel in foreign parts, to Mr. Anthony Benezet at Philadelphia. Dated the 6th of February, 1768.

S I R,

YOUR letter to the Society for propagating the gospel in foreign parts, of the 26th of April last, hath been considered by them with all due attention. And I am directed

rected to assure you that they have a great esteem for you, on account of the tenderness and humanity which you express for the Negroe slaves, and are extremely desirous that they should be treated with the utmost care and kindness, both with regard to temporals and spirituals. That their labour should be made easy to them in all respects. That they should be provided with conveniencies and accommodations to render their situation comfortable, and especially that they should be regularly instructed in the principles of the Christian religion. The Society have for many years past uniformly given directions to their agents in Barbadoes, agreeable to these sentiments, which they believe have been observed in a good degree. However they have lately sent to make more particular inquiries into this matter with full purpose of transmitting, in the strongest terms, such further orders as may be found necessary, and of watching over the execution of them with all possible attention; hoping that the good effects of their example will have a proper, and by degrees a general influence on other owners of slaves in America. But they cannot condemn the practice of keeping slaves as unlawful, finding the contrary very plainly implied in the precepts given by the apostles, both to masters and servants, which last were then for the most part slaves. And if the doctrine of the unlawfulness of slavery should be taught in our colonies, the Society apprehend that masters, instead of being con-

vinced of it, will grow more suspicious and cruel, and much more unwilling to let their slaves learn Christianity: and that the poor creatures themselves, if they come to look on this doctrine as true, will be so strongly tempted by it to rebel against their masters, that the most dreadful consequences to both will be likely to follow, and therefore, though the Society is fully satisfied that your intention in this matter is perfectly good, yet they most earnestly beg you not to go farther in publishing your notions, but rather to retract them if you shall see cause, which they hope you may on farther consideration.

TRACT

TRACT THE THIRD.

OF THE

NEGROE SLAVES IN THE COLONIES.

THE lawfulness of purchasing Negroe slaves, and continuing them and their posterity in perpetual servitude, having been admitted by the venerable Society for propagating the gospel in foreign parts, in their letter to Mr. Benezet, at Philadelphia, dated the 6th of February, 1768, I shall now, in pursuance of my former purpose, endeavour to engage the attention of the Society to some considerations which may lead to a humane and christian system, for the civil government and religious instruction of those unhappy people.

The term slave having no legal signification in Great Britain, and being generally used for describing the subjects of the most despotic tyrants, it is commonly understood to denote, one who has no rights, his labour, property, and life being at the discretion of his

his master. This definition of the term is far from being a true one in respect to the Negroe slaves in the British colonies; their owners have no other than a legal property in them, and legal authority over them, and the same laws which make them slaves, give them rights.

In no British colony is the life of the slave left in the power of the owner, and for cruel usage, or insufficient nourishment, the slave has a remedy similar to that of apprentices in England, though from the ignorance of the Negroe, and the partiality of the magistrates, who are too frequently *Socii Criminis*, the tyranny of the planter is much seldom punished in America, than the rigour of a master in England.

If then the slavery of the Negroes in our colonies be no more than a legal, perpetual servitude, or hereditary apprenticeship, those people are surely to be deemed subjects of Great Britain in their particular capacity and circumstance, nor ought the laws of the several colonies respecting them, to pass *sub silentio*, and without examination by the king's privy council, as matters with which the supreme magistrate has nothing to do; neither should those laws be permitted to sleep after they have been enacted, or what is still worse, suffered to be carried into execution by those they deem parties, and between whom and the Negroes they create reciprocal duties.—The influence of the venerable
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Society may perhaps obtain for these people, what it has been the disgrace of every administration since the Revolution to have neglected, an impartial dispensation of the laws, nor has any patriot in all that time been found disinterested enough to take their cause in hand; the Negroes indeed can do nothing either to further them in their pursuit of power, or to secure their elections in the country; they can only recommend them by their prayers, to a seat in a kingdom where no modern patriot chuses to take his entire reward. We are now blessed with a prince upon the throne, whose heart, warmed by religious benevolence, wishes the felicity of all mankind; would he then suffer, if he were informed of it, so vast a multitude of his own subjects to be inhumanely scourged, lacerated by whips, nourishment denied, and the task of labour exacted, racked by every species of torture the most wanton tyranny can invent, and either forced to expire under them, or their lives shortened by their severity. And all this in the teeth of laws, to which his Majesty, by his representative, has assented?

Were his Majesty moved to give directions to his ministers, in this interval of war throughout the world, to take under consideration the several colony acts for the government of slaves, and to require the several governors and chief justices to report the manner of their execution; the legal rights
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of the Negroes would then be known, and the defects in the dispensation of justice towards them be pointed out. It would then appear, that notwithstanding the provincial laws enjoin rest to the slaves on the Sabbath, the most humane planters in the islands allow the Negroes that day to work in for themselves, as their best way of employing their time, while others contrive to share with the Negroe in the profits of his labour, by either abridging him of his ordinary weekly allowance of provisions, or obliging him to find part of his cloathing on account of giving him *all Sunday to himself*. I take particular notice of this evasion of divine and statute laws, because of its rendering all religious instruction impracticable, and to shew that the civil and religious regulations respecting these wretches must go together; indeed until the planters are made to know that their property in their Negroes is legal, not absolute and unconditional, but that their Negroes have rights as well as they, nothing can ever be done for their civil comfort or their religious instruction. The colony laws universally prohibit the teaching Negroes to write, a caution which the planters think necessary to prevent conspiracies, and communication of ill designs; nor is writing at all requisite for their religious instruction, even reading does not seem indispensably necessary for that purpose; How few among the Jews, or in any nation
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of antiquity, understood letters? And until the Reformation the people of this country were generally illiterate; will it then be said, that none in those circumstances were capable of being taught all that was necessary for their salvation? Or that they could not know and believe what was for their soul's health? On the other hand, the knowledge of letters, even in the lowest degree, is too often supposed to carry with it a sort of qualification for an easy life, and an exemption from a laborious one; and the latter being the Negroes lot, they might perhaps bear it with more unwillingness, or seek some desperate means for ridding themselves of it. The stated service of our church cannot indeed be joined in throughout, by those who cannot read; but I should hope to see a more simple mode of religious worship and instruction, presented to the Negroes, one in which they should bear a less share than is given by our liturgy to the people, and therefore better adapted to their capacities and condition. Too much must not be attempted at once, *men's meat must not be given to babes*. These creatures are even ignorant that there is a God, they must then be taught a maker before they can comprehend a redeemer. It has been too much our way to tell them of both in a breath, and if they could be got to gabber over the apostles creed without understanding the meaning of a single term, then to throw some water in their face, and tell all

the world how many Christians we had made, and thus expose the interests of the church and the honour of the Society, to the ridicule of those who were acquainted with the mummery of those vain boastings. Teaching the Negroes the church of England's catechism, is the general employment of the Society's missionaries ; but besides its being much above their comprehension, it is too long, and too difficult to be got by heart by the Negroes in the little time the missionary can spare to each, or their owners can be without their service, for the owners of slaves will not suffer them to assemble together in large bodies, nor to have much intercourse with one another ; indeed few owners of Negroes will suffer them to go to the catechist at all, because of his house being a sort of general rendezvous for them, where they are more apt to teach each other mischief than to profit by the catechist's instructions. In those colonies, where the Negroes out-number the white inhabitants, such rendezvous would be highly dangerous, even in the towns, and the planters in the country would never consent to let their several gangs meet together. The truth is, that all instruction intended for these people while they are slaves, must be given them within their owners precincts.

Itinerant missionaries will therefore best serve this purpose, and as the missionary's attendance at each plantation would, after some time, be only necessary for an hour on Sundays,

Sundays, he might visit several the same day; for if the planters approved of the plan, either themselves or their overseers would carry it on in the absence of the missionary.

Laymen would probably be more zealous in this business than ordained missionaries, as they might hope by a faithful discharge of it, to recommend themselves to the Society for Orders and less laborious missions. Besides, the capacity of a Negroe is so mean, and the things he knows so very few and of so ordinary a sort, that a man of a liberal education never could stoop to make use of such low, not to say absurd imagery, as would be necessary to convey his ideas to them. Indeed I am afraid there would be something impious in the representations he would be obliged to make of the Almighty in order to bring him down to their understandings, nor would it be easy to frame any thing like a creed or catechism for these poor creatures that would not be either shocking or ridiculous.

There is a dialect peculiar to those Negroes who have been born in our colonies, or have been long there, that the missionary must adopt, in order to make himself understood, than which nothing could be more uncouth to the pronunciation of a man of science; nor would it be less difficult for him to bring himself to study what they said to him. Enthusiasm is only equal to such undertakings, and none could be fitter for the employment, than those lay preachers who are now in such numbers offering themselves to the Society.

Might I be permitted to hint at the instructions which would be proper for these missionaries, I would confine them to a very short summary of religion. That there is one God in heaven who never dies, and who sees and knows every thing. That he made all people, both whites and blacks. That he punishes all roguery, mischief, and lying, either before death or after it. That he punishes them for it before they die, by putting it into their masters hearts to correct them, and after death by giving them to the devil to burn in his own place. That he will put it into their masters hearts to be kind to those who do their work without knavery or murmuring. To take care of them in old age and sickness, and not to plague them with too much work, or to chastise them when they are not able to do it. That in the other world after they die, he will give all good Negroes rest from all labour, and plenty of all good things. That it was God Almighty who put it into their masters heads to give them Sunday for a holiday, and for that reason they ought to say prayers to him, and sing songs to him on that day. That the missionary was come to them to tell them what God Almighty would have them do, that they might deserve his kindness for them, and that they would anger him if they did not mind what he told them. The heads of such a discourse being thrown into a sort of catechism for the Negroes to get by heart, it would be fixed in their memories, and those of them who could
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reason upon it would acquire an appetite to know somewhat more. To such, the doctrine of the satisfaction might then be opened, by simply telling them that every body, black and white, had done so many bad things that God Almighty was very angry with all the world, and said he would kill them all, and that none of them should be happy after their death. Upon which Jesus Christ, God's only Son, said he would take their faults upon himself, and that God might punish him for them; and accordingly Jesus Christ came down from heaven and suffered himself to be whipped and tortured, and at last killed, and so made it up between his Father and the world. That he left the Bible behind him for directions to the world what they should do to please his Father and him, and that he promised to stand up for all those who should do what that book told them, and would help them when they prayed to him for his assistance.

The Negroes in general have an ear for musick, and might without much trouble be taught to sing hymns, which would be the pleasantest method of instructing them, and bringing them speedily to offer praise to God. They should be taught short prayers for morning and evening, and grace to say at meals.

To engage the planters to second the endeavours of the missionaries, it would be highly necessary to preface the directory, which may be thought fit to be composed for the use of the missionaries, and to be dispersed
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among the planters, with a discourse addressed to the owners of Negroes in the colonies, in which the lawfulness of retaining the Negroe slaves in perpetual servitude should be set forth as the opinion of the Society, and the obligation to bring those into the knowledge of the truth whom God Almighty permits to be subject to their direction, and to labour for their benefit, pressed home upon their consciences.

Care being thus taken for an impartial administration of civil justice to these unhappy people, and the sabbath allowed them for the purposes of religion: their owners being also freed from all apprehensions of losing their Negroes service by suffering them to be instructed in religious duties, and a mode of instruction being adapted to their capacities and conditions, much might be hoped through the Divine favour and assistance, and the ignorance and cruel treatment of these creatures would no longer be a reproach to the wisdom and humanity of our civil and ecclesiastical rulers. The stupid obstinacy of the Negroes may indeed make it always necessary to subject them to severe discipline from their masters, but in no other circumstances does their condition of perpetual servitude require that their treatment should be different from that of hired servants, especially if they had the same religion and morality to bind them, that the others have. But whilst the civil authority overlooks them, and they are left without other motives for action, and hardly more know-

knowledge of their duty, than is common to them with domestic animals, it is no wonder that they are treated like brute beasts, or that it should be almost necessary to treat them as such. If they are incapable of feeling mentally, they will the more frequently be made to feel in their flesh. To those therefore who have the power or influence to redress the grievances of these poor wretches, is their case committed, and from those, who through indolence, or by feigning ignorance, or pretending an abhorrence of their condition, turn away from considering it, will the impartial Judge of all the earth, one day require an account of the misery of these their fellow creatures.

F I N I S.





